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(News Behind The News)

By James Free

WASHINGTON — Our number one U. S. spy is, at the moment, the most spied upon federal agency boss in the country. He is John A. McCone, director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Secret operatives do not follow him to his off hours. But his every act, word and mood are matters of avid concern to dozens, even hundreds, in higher echelons of the CIA and the State Department as well. Everything he does is analyzed for clues to his thoughts and plans for the future of CIA.

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Why? Because private industry—and old Republican McCone plainly—is squaring away for some bone-rattling changes in CIA key personnel—and probably in CIA operations too. Few outsiders will know who is fired or transferred. For CIA hierarchy names are not well known, except possibly in Washington society columns and circles. For example, only its director and his deputy in the huge agency are listed in the Congressional Directory, guide to federal officialdom.

One reason President Kennedy picked McCone to tighten up things at CIA after the Cuban invasion fiasco was that McCone learned a lot about bureaucratic infighting when he was chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under President Eisenhower.

And where do upper level executives of the State Department tie in all this?

The answer is that the policies they recommend for United States relations with other countries often are influenced by CIA reports on those countries.

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More often than not, association between policy makers at State and evaluators of intelligence at CIA has been close. There was a long period of the brothers at the summit, the late John Foster Dulles as secretary of state

and Allen W. Dulles as head of CIA. (Sister Eleanor Lansing Dulles still holds a top State job.)

Doubtless this kinship had a trickle-down effect on subordinates. Skeptical observers have suspected, on occasion, that CIA-State fraternalism at the top may have influenced the judgment of CIA in its evaluation of basic intelligence materials.

In short, CIA evaluators—consciously or unconsciously—may have tended to support known policy preferences of State Department or White House advisers.

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Thus, when Allen Dulles retired from CIA, after staying on a few months at the President's request, it was only natural that the new secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and those closest to him on foreign policy decisions, had their favorites as a successor. So did McGeorge Bundy, White House foreign affairs specialist.

Both Rusk and Bundy were reported to favor appointment of Paul H. Nitze. He has served with distinction in high relatively hush-hush posts under both Democratic and Republican administrations. (Nitze is now assistant secretary of Defense in charge of international security affairs.)

McCone's nomination caught the movers and shakers of CIA off balance. And his performance so far in office has kept them that way. They know he is firmly resolved to improve CIA performance and to boost its currently low rating with the President, the Congress and the country. They know that he will speak frankly in closed sessions with Congressional committees on how CIA conducts its business. That is why so many of our professional spies have become McCone-watchers. Their job security is in his hands.

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